22 STEPS TO MASTERING NEGOTIATION

by

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Introduction

Negotiating has to be instinctive. You have to get in your flow of how you act and react. You can't just all of a sudden start and stop in a negotiation when you want to put something in play one at a time. So, what I try to do is negotiate everything.

> ne·go·ti·ate
> *verb: obtain or bring about by discussion*

With my kids I used to say, "Oh you want to stay up late? Great! What do I get out of this? Well, I'd like to see a cleaner room; I'd like to see some better grades..."

Yes, everything is a negotiation. If I want to buy a car, I'll go to 10 dealerships, not because I have any intention of buying a car at all of those places, but I want to be sold. I want to see what the *feeling* is like. What's their technique? How are they going to get me?

At the end of the day, negotiating is a style thing. When you're finished reading this you don't want to negotiate like me. You want to negotiate like you. *But*, there are certain techniques—"tricks of the trade"—to ultimately getting what you want. And isn't that what what it's all about? To get what we want?

1. What's winning for the other person?

I never start articulating my most important points until I have an understanding of what the other person's most important points are.

Listening is the key. I mean *really* listen. No one is going to spoon-feed you with the information you are trying to extract. They may change their tone, voice or body language. There are a lot of different things that are going to clue you in to tell you what that person is looking for.

And keep in mind, everybody has what they want and then they have the thing that is the game-changer.

Here's why this works: if I can get someone what they want while most other people are just worried about what's most important to themselves, then I have already won.

Why? When you get what you want, you tend to put your hair down a bit; you tend to relax and you think to yourself, "Wow, I got out of this what I needed. Let me see how I can take care of you."

If you aren't getting there, it's because you haven't asked the right questions.

It's not about the answers. You are constantly on a fishing expedition.

2. Timing is everything.

If you want to buy a car, it probably makes sense to buy one at the end of the month. Why? Everybody is trying to make his or her numbers!

But, maybe I can't wait until the end of the month because my lease is up and I need another car by Monday. On the other side of the negotiation, that's what the dealer is trying to find out. "How bad does Brandon need this car? How quickly can he pull the trigger on a deal?"

My asset in that situation is I'm liquid, I'm ready to pull the trigger, but I'm in no rush. "This is my second car," "I use my roommates car," "I don't really drive that much, but I'd like to have this."

And sticking with the car example, I always buy a car at the end of a model year run. Why? New cars are coming out and they have to get rid of the old ones.

Negotiating is a thinking person's game.

When should you talk to somebody? Some people are better in the morning. Others are better in the afternoon.

Never negotiate with someone on a Monday morning. Why? Because they're backed up! They have the whole weekend's worth of stuff piled up that they didn't do yet.

Don't negotiate right before lunch. Blood-sugar level is a little low. They could be hungry.

Negotiate a little later in the morning or early in the afternoon so that they're not in a rush to get home.

3. Where you are matters.

I always like to negotiate on my terms. If I am in the middle of a negotiation and it's logistically feasible, I want that person in my house. I want them right in my office, my living room or my favorite restaurant. That gives me advantage.

Yes, "home court advantage" is a real thing.

I'm comfortable, you're a little not.

If someone can go to my office versus me going to their office, that's an advantage. Depending on how good you are, the phone could be an advantage, too. But, if you're not great on the phone, or the other person tends to get distracted, don't settle an important negotiation on the phone…get off your ass and go see them.

Think about how you can get to a place—a physical place—where maybe you are a little comfortable and the other person is not.

4. Determine if you actually have leverage.

Do you have legitimate leverage? That's a big factor.

If you are going to buy a car that there's a waiting list for, or a suit that you know is on a limited run, you don't have a lot of leverage if you really want it.

My wife will go into a furniture store and she will see a couch she likes. Immediately she'll tell the salesperson we need a couch. At that point we're already done—the salesperson knows we want it and they know I'm not going to disappoint my wife.

Never let someone know how much you want or need something. Never show those cards. Just like if you're at a poker game and you have a full house, you don't want to tell anybody because they'll fold.

On the other side of the table, when you know how badly someone has to have something, the negotiation is over. When I know you have to have something, that's it. How do I find that out? Ask questions. Let them talk. Listen.

I always think back to a time I was visiting the Steiner Sports Store at Roosevelt Field in Garden City, NY. A lady walks in she said, "Oh this photo, my husband loves this I just have to buy it. Can I get a discount?"

No. Why? You put your cards on the table. It's over. As a smart salesperson, you're listening. As a buyer, what I would have said instead is, "My wife likes this photo and she likes this other photo in that gallery on the other side of the mall. I'm torn between what I should get." Now you have to convince me to stay in your store.

5. Can the other person make a decision?

Back to the furniture store example: I told the salesperson, "Yeah, my wife does like this couch, but she also likes two other couches we saw at another place already this morning before we got here. If you can do the right thing on this couch, maybe I don't have to go back to that store."

Now the salesperson is faced with an opportunity to make a decision. The question is, are they the decision maker? Are you talking to the right person?

Whenever you hear, "Okay let me get back to you," that's when the person in the back is the one that's really making the call.

Are you dealing with someone that has the power and authority to make a decision? If you can get to the right person when you're negotiating only three things can happen. The person can say yes or no or they can send you to their boss—someone higher up the chain. The way I look at it is I have a 66% chance of success.

For that reason, I always try to get to the boss first! If I have a better chance of success by getting to the ultimate decision maker, I shoot for the top. If I go to the boss and they're interested, they'll probably direct me to the person I would have spoken to anyway. But, that person will be more inclined to be agreeable with me if a directive is coming down from their boss.

One of the biggest mistakes I made when I was first starting my business was there were countless times where I would talk to somebody, but they weren't actually the decision-maker. Ultimately that's an enormous waste of time and can be very ineffective. That's what you would call running in the wrong direction, enthusiastically.

6. Do you want the money?

Do you want the money? Or, would you rather the person you're negotiating with have the money?

Out of the two of you, one of you is going to get the money. You negotiate to navigate through the gap between what the other person thinks they want to give you and what they ultimately have the ability to give you.

By the way, when someone says to you, "I'm not making any money on this, I'm practically giving it away," get out of there. That's the biggest crock of bull s—t. Seriously, leave the premises immediately.

Why? Because if they're not making any money, they're not going to be in business very long and you don't want to do business with them. Go to a place where they actually are making money. That way if you have a problem in the future, you know they're going to be there in a couple years to fix it for you.

7. Never give an ultimatum.

Ultimatums are a complete sign of weakness. They are relationship breakers. It's a show that you are not willing to meet in the middle with someone and communicate.

"Either give me this price or I'm out of here," is not a sign of strength. Particularly with your family members—adults, kids, wives, husbands, cousins, aunts, uncles, parents—it's the worst thing to ever do.

8. Know your Plan B.

You have to know when to quietly open up the door (if you know you have nothing else in the tank).

So, ask yourself a few questions. If you're buying office supplies, can you buy them somewhere else?

If you're lacking leverage, are you prepared to be sensitive to the finer details of that negotiation? Keep in mind, not every negotiation is about "mowing them down," and having a real rough-and-tough attitude. There can be a lighter, friendlier aspect to it.

"Killing them with kindness," can be its own style.

9. "Win if you can, lose if you must, if not always cheat."

Now don't be confused, I will rip your heart out to get what I want, but not from a lying, cheating or stealing standpoint. That comes from the standpoint of sticking your ground, being firm in your beliefs and battling.

If you don't have some of that going on in your blood, then you can't be a full, great negotiator.

But, never lie. If someone calls you out on a weakness, they're just testing you to see if you're trustworthy. Own up to something. If something isn't your strength, be upfront about it from the start and use that to your advantage.

"Win if you can, lose if you must, if not always cheat."
– Jesse Ventura

Strategy can play a role in negotiating. Use other people that know someone that you are trying to work with.

Ask the people closest to you, "What am I missing?" Don't be afraid to ask for help!

Use every resource available to you so that you can ultimately get to a place where you are getting someone exactly what they want.

10. The way you say something matters.

The nuances you can place on the spoken word are a huge factor that can make-or-break a negotiation. It's not what you're saying, but the way you're saying it.

"Listen, my boss is all over my ass. I have to come out of here with something different. He's all over me to get a better price."

I've heard that shpiel. Here's how you respond:

"Okay, I'll give you what you're asking for. But, then you have to buy this other thing, too, so that way I can go back to my boss and say that I have a wider buy."

11. Winning is both people getting what they want.

Unless you have an incredible Plan B, or incredible leverage, winning is both people getting what they want—a happy medium. Sure, maybe the advantage goes your way a little bit. But, if you want to go back to that person ever again in your lifetime, make sure that little bit isn't a lot a bit!

If you've ever kicked someone's ass in a negotiation, you know that payback is a bitch. All of a sudden you go back to someone and the leverage has swung.

A win is a win. If I'm coaching a basketball team, I don't need to win by 30. I'm comfortable taking the W by just a few points. In this day in age, it seems as though it has become a lost art, but be humble.

12. Getting what you want has everything to do with knowing what you want.

You don't always get what you want, as The Rolling Stones would say. However, one of the biggest mistakes that I see when my employees try to negotiate for raises or promotions is they haven't clearly laid out everything they want. Maybe it's in their heads, but if it's not on paper, it might as well be nothing.

You get what you negotiate and if you are not prepared then you will be missing out.

My point: be organized. Make a full list of everything you want, so that you are crystal clear on the outcome you would like. Also, make a list of things the person you are negotiating with wants and attack that list hard.

I may sit with an employee that asks for a $5,000 raise and the first thing I say to them is, "Okay I'll give you the raise."

But after that, silence. They don't know what else to say! It's not just about the money. What other things are important to you that are worth discussing in your negotiation?

13. The most important things are always the most important things.

I will walk away from a negotiation if I don't get one or two specific things and I will always figure those out ahead of time.

Don't get caught up in something not going your way if it's not one of your deal-breakers. Focus on the most important things first.

Always have your deal-breakers. Have you ever seen *A Bronx Tale*? You know the scene where Sonny tells C about the door test:

> *"Alright, listen to me. You pull up right where she lives, right? Before you get outta the car, you lock both doors. Then, get outta the car, you walk over to her. You bring her over to the car. Dig out the key, put it in the lock and open the door for her. Then you let her get in. Then you close the door. Then you walk around the back of the car and look through the rear window. If she doesn't reach over and lift up that button so that you can get in: dump her."*
>
> *"Just like that?"*
>
> *"Listen to me, kid. If she doesn't reach over and lift up that button so that you can get in, that means she's a selfish broad and all you're seeing is the tip of the iceberg. You dump her and you dump her fast."*

Communicate what your deal-breaker is in a dynamic way. And, be fully aware of what the deal-breakers are for the person you are negotiating with.

14. Inclusion breeds commitment.

The longer I negotiate, the more the situation is in my favor. When I first did the Yankees-Steiner deal years ago, we had already been going for a period of about two years and that's okay.

It's not really a matter of wearing people thin. It's a matter of understanding what's important to people. The more you know, the more people will feel like you understand them. Time is about having more opportunities to find out more information about where things are going and being able to act on that information.

In the two years I was working on the Yankees-Steiner deal, I realized how big of an operation that truly was. That was an opportunity for me to learn a whole lot more that I didn't anticipate at the beginning.

You want to get people vested in your situation and that's when the pendulum will start to swing your way.

15. Pause when you are too far apart.

If someone's at a figurative, emotional "10" and I'm at a "2" I never negotiate. Doing that would just end up being a fight and an easy way to ruin a relationship.

It's okay to take a break. You can say, "You know something? I need an hour to think things through. I believe what you're saying is really important and I want to see how what you're offering measures up to what I'm looking for."

Space allows you to have more perspective. It creates a vacuum---it enables people to see things a bit differently (and reignite some urgency, too). I know it's cut down for TV, but I can't stand it when I see entrepreneurs on *Shark Tank* ask for a few minutes to think things over or to talk with a business partner and they get ridiculed by the sharks for it. Why?

Sometimes I'll take a whole weekend. It may be a Thursday and I say to somebody, "Let's talk about this Monday. Give me a few days to think about it." This also may tell you something. You may be able to get a sense of how itchy the other person is to close a deal. You can measure their sense of urgency.

16. Don't dilute your ability to make a decision.

I had an employee come into my office once asking for a raise. He opened the conversation with, "You know, I was talking to my wife and she just really thinks that I should be getting a raise."

Huh? No one wants to hear that. That isn't powerful. Bring your wife in here if that's the case! The reality is that employee wouldn't have brought that to the table if that were true—ultimately he didn't know what else to say and he didn't understand his value. All that did was create confusion.

Now, the reality is you will have to consult or husband or wife or boss in the middle of a negotiation. So, when you're on the other side, don't be so specific when you need to do that. Just ask for a time out to think about it. Who you speak to during that time is your business unless it is specifically helping the negotiation otherwise.

That approach weakens your position so dramatically. You make yourself less valuable. It creates an uneven, disingenuous conversation.

17. Think of all the possibilities.

Whenever I talk to Derek Jeter I can only think about one thing: preparation. Out of the thousands of professional athletes I have met over the course of my career, there has been no one more prepared for every situation and scenario that could occur in a game. When you would see Derek shifting around the infield on every pitch, he's thinking about everything that could happen—where the base runner may go, what pitch is being thrown, where he has to go if there's a ball in the gap, if they're throwing home on a slow ground ball, etc.

Every time you negotiate you have to prepare for everything that could possibly happen. That way, when you are in the middle of your negotiation how you react to what the other person is bringing to the table feels like second nature.

Always be thinking of the different scenarios that will put you in the best position to win. Negotiating is an art.

18. Your time has value.

Negotiating is a full-time sport. It's a mindset, not a task-oriented thing. It's not a line item on a list. Either you're a negotiator, or you're a person that likes to negotiate once in a while. You can't turn it on and turn it off when you feel like it. You have to live and breathe every moment and every opportunity.

Yet, you also have to understand when there are moments that are worth negotiating versus when you should just refuse.

I was with my family in a market in Morocco and my kids said, "Dad, go over there and get a good deal on these cool hats."

No! I'm not spending a half hour on my vacation to try to save $5. It just doesn't make any sense. But, I did say to my son, "Crosby, give it a whirl. I'll see you in action. Just tell me which way you want me to walk when you're done talking to this guy."

If you have a solid Plan B (because you know in the market there were at least 10 other people selling hats), then you should be willing to walk away. Until you show you are willing to walk away from someone, they will not understand that you are convicted in your beliefs.

19. Create leverage for yourself.

Most people are lazy. You don't want to make the other call and you don't want to get to the other store. But, that means "they" get the money and you don't.

Don't show all your cards and give too much information away. Nobody needs to know that his or her product is your only option. Don't give up your leverage so easily.

If you're a media buyer and you need an ad placement with a particular TV station, don't tell the person on the other line, "Oh gosh, my boss is killing me that we have to get our ads on your station."

Instead, you have to be able to say to somebody in a nice way, "I really think this could work, but I have two senior people in my office that want to go with your competitor station. I don't know what to do! ~~Can~~ ~~Would~~ Could you help me here? I'm torn. They don't even want me to make this call, but I like you and I think we could do good business together."

You can spin something any way you want to create real leverage.

By the way, could is the word you want to use when you're negotiating. There's a big difference between asking an employee, "Would you work late tonight?" and "Can you work late tonight?" vs. "Could you work late tonight?"

20. Know when you're going to lose.

When you bluff, be careful. It can be a very risky proposition. Be prepared for someone to call you on your bluff and be willing to take the hit.

It can be very easy for the salesperson on the other line of your call with the TV station to know that their competitors have all of their ad slots full.

I have a nice little bruise right on my backside. I have a lot of years of winning, but there have been a lot of doors that have hit my ass on the way out.

Be prepared to lose. Just because you're losing, it doesn't mean your lost (thank you, Jay Z). Some people look at losing as a loss, but it's learning. The only way you're going to get better is to self-analyze a negotiation.

Did I know that person like I thought I did? Did I press too hard? Was I too soft? Did I pay attention to all of their deal-breakers?

If you want to win big, there is a fine line you walk next to losing big. And, I have lost big. I have lost hundreds of thousands of dollars on deals with all sorts of characters. I talked about it in my first book, but not signing David Wells after the 1998 World Series almost put Steiner Sports out of business. If I was only willing to add on $5 per autograph the deal would have been okay—very foolish on my part.

Bring it to 2017. I missed a shot at Aaron Judge. Sometimes you're negotiating on something that is going to have a dramatic effect on your company and a lot of people. Signing him to an exclusive deal would have meant a few million dollars in increased sales for the year. It didn't work out and I had a lot of learning to do this past year.

21. When you get what you want, shut the f—k up.

People tend to keep talking when they get what they want. Don't do that. It's not hard. You don't need to throw sprinkles on the sundae.

You get what you want? Zip it.

I can't tell you how many times I am sitting with someone and I say, "I'm going to give you what you want." And they keep going. Shut up.

It's a common mistake that people make all the time when they are negotiating. You don't need to talk.

22. Learning to negotiate is free.

It takes a while, but one of the ways I learned how to negotiate was to be sold and negotiated to. I always practiced by going into stores and striking up a conversation with a salesperson. All I did was observe how I was being sold—listening to their words and phrasing, seeing the body language, familiarizing myself with their mannerisms. When I started doing that over time, it became easy to separate the good negotiators from the bad.

There are some really masterful salespeople out there, and observing their techniques and key tactics out in the field is just a free education. I have learned some of my greatest strategies from people selling shoes and cars.

Now what?

To be a great negotiator you have to be able to wear all of these different hats—timing, location, how you say things, how someone wants things, having a Plan B creating leverage…everything!

I know I'm pretty good, but I didn't become a master negotiator overnight, and there is always room to grow. As long as you are willing to learn and have an understanding of why you want to become a better negotiator, you're going to come out on top.

You have to ask yourself whether you want negotiate great or if you want to be a great negotiator? There is a clear distinction between the two.

Great negotiators are great listeners that have the ability to understand what the other person needs, equally, if not more than what you need. They are strategic, logical and diligent. As they're thinking about how a deal could work for them, they're equally thinking about how it could work for someone else.

Not dealing with someone else's most important issues is like going to see your favorite band at a concert and they don't play your favorite song. You leave the venue feeling incomplete. No good negotiator will let a negotiation end that way, so I will leave you with this:

Negotiating the most important thing is the most important thing.